

Report to the Legislature

Children's Administration
Annual Quality Assurance Report, Fiscal Year 2017
July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017

RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.260

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Children's Administration Overview

Safe, healthy individuals, families, and communities

State law requires the Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration to produce this annual Quality Assurance Report on its efforts to enhance child safety and permanency and to support child and family well-being.

This is the 21st report detailing performance outcome data under RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.260 that shows performance in the following specific service areas.

Child Protective Services (CPS) response time

The Administration responds quickly to allegations of abuse or neglect and implements safeguards to protect children who have been abused or neglected from further abuse or neglect at the hands of their caregivers.

Children's health and safety in out-of-home care

The Administration monitors children in out-of-home care, performs health and safety checks on licensed facilities, and works to provide safe placements to children who have been removed from their families due to abuse or neglect so that they are not abused or neglected in licensed care.

Adherence to permanency planning guidelines

The Administration works toward placing children in safe permanent homes as quickly as possible and tracks progress with reference to permanency within 12 months.

Children's length of stay in out-of-home placement

The Administration seeks to minimize the amount of time children spend in out-of-home care prior to reunification or other permanency plan completion.

Children's Administration provides or oversees provision of services and supports throughout the public child welfare continuum of care. Its roles include:

- Responding to and investigating reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- Providing or overseeing the provision of child and family services and supports to help parents safely care for their own children whenever possible.
- Securing safe and stable temporary placements for children until they may safely be returned home or placed into an alternative safe and stable permanent home.
- Overseeing the provision of medical, educational, and mental health services to children in out-of-home care.
- Licensing and monitoring foster family and relative homes for temporary placement of children, as well as congregate care or therapeutic facilities to care for children.
- Providing services and supports to youth transitioning from out-of-home care into responsible independent living.

The Administration tracks performance in many areas of service delivery and oversight in an effort to improve outcomes. This report addresses only the measures required by state law.

Additional performance information is available at
<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/data/metrics/CA.pdf>.

Children’s Administration is accountable to the Legislature and to the public for continuing to improve the child welfare system. The Administration recognizes no government entity alone can ensure the safety of children. The Administration relies on mandated reporters such as community-based service providers, faith communities, schools, and caring individuals to speak up on behalf of vulnerable children by reporting suspected child maltreatment.

The data in this report comes from the federally mandated State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), which in Washington is called FamLink. The data used to report on the measures in this report is the most current available for fiscal year (FY) 2017 and displays seven years of performance. State measures are reported by state fiscal year (SFY), which is July 1 through June 30. Federal measures, required by the federal Administration for Children and Families, are reported by federal fiscal year (FFY), which is October 1 through September 30. The data source and reporting period are noted for each measure.

Federal targets in this report reflect federal requirements and performance needed to avoid a federal Program Improvement Plan. These federal measures use an entry cohort approach, which requires the state to wait 12 months or more to determine whether the outcome being measured has occurred. The year label reflects the year of the entry cohort being measured.

Performance Measure Summary

The following measures are included in this report:

Measure	State Target*/ Federal Target**	Performance***
Timely response in emergent referrals	≥ 98.5%*	98.0%
Timely response in non-emergent referrals	≥ 97%*	98.0%
Children who did not experience recurrence of abuse	≥ 95.0%**	92.1%
Children who are abused or neglected while in the placement and care authority of the state	≤ 6.8 days/100,000**	6.05 days/100,000
Foster homes receiving health and safety checks	≥ 10%*	12.8%
Children visited every month by their worker	≥ 98%*	97.7%
Children achieving permanency within 12 months of placement	≥ 37.9%**	30.9%
Median number of days children are placed in care	Previous year 495	528
Percentage of children who remain safely with their family for 12 months following reunification	≥ 93%**	94.3%

* Targets are established by the Children’s Administration to set a standard for performance.

** Federal Targets reflect performance necessary to avoid a federal Program Improvement Plan.

*** State measures report performance through SFY 2017. Federal measures report performance for children entering in FFY 2015 and FFY 2016 because the measures look forward 12 or 24 months to determine if the outcome being measured occurred in FFY 2017.

Safety

Goal: *Children will be safe from abuse and neglect*

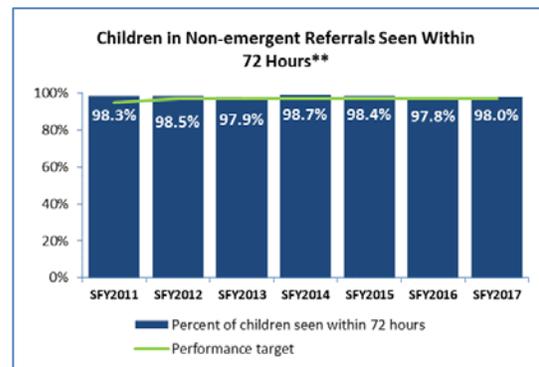
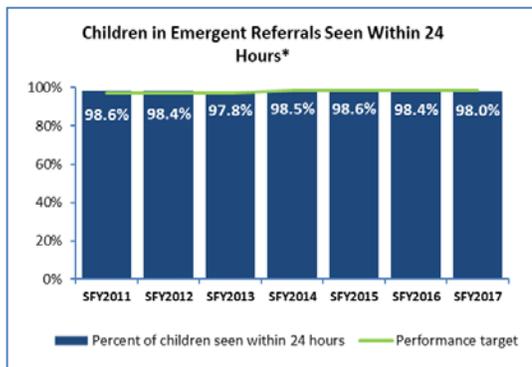
Objective: **Initiate timely CPS response**

Measured by: **Children seen face-to-face by a worker following a report of abuse or neglect requiring a face-to-face response**

When an intake worker receives a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, they must determine, based on the information provided, whether the report meets legal sufficiency to warrant a face-to-face CPS response. The worker must establish if the information indicates that some type of abuse or neglect may have occurred and if he or she has enough information to identify and locate the child or children involved.

Reports meeting the sufficiency screen and criteria for either an emergent or a non-emergent response are screened in for investigation or family assessment response. When a child or group of children meets the legal criteria for an emergent response or is determined to be at “imminent risk” of harm, a worker must initiate an investigation and make face-to-face contact with the child within 24 hours of receipt of the report. Reports meeting the criteria for non-emergent response require workers to make face-to-face contact with the child within 72 hours from receipt of the report.

Children’s Administration continues its efforts to improve child safety, evidenced by the Results Washington target established at the beginning of state fiscal year 2014 that 98.5 percent of children in emergent reports will be seen within 24 hours. During state fiscal year 2017, 98.0 percent of children in emergent reports were seen within 24 hours, .5 percent below the target. Of the children in non-emergent reports, 98.0 percent were seen within 72 hours, which exceeded the target of 97 percent.



*Average annual percentage of children in emergent CPS reports seen or attempted to be seen within 24 hours. Excludes Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) CPS reports. The performance target is 98.5 percent or greater.

Source: FamLink

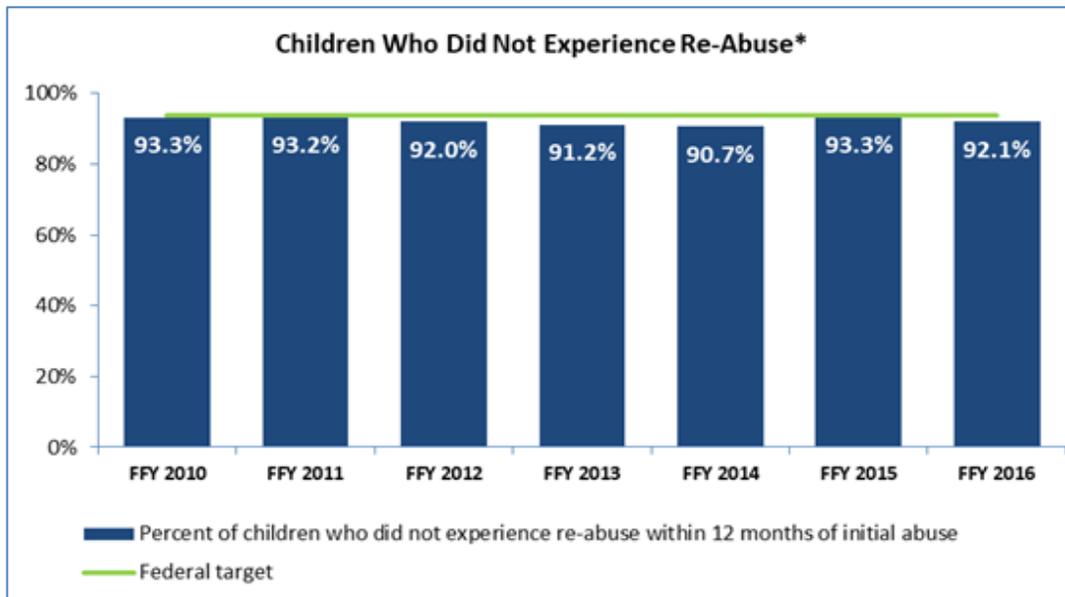
**Average annual percentage of children in non-emergent CPS reports seen or attempted to be seen within 72 hours. Excludes Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) CPS reports. The performance target is 97 percent or greater.

Source: FamLink

Objective: Reduce recurrence of abuse or neglect
Measured by: Children who do not experience re-abuse

A child is considered the victim of re-abuse or recurrence when he or she has experienced a founded allegation of abuse or neglect within 12 months of a previous finding of abuse or neglect, excluding reports in the first 14 days. An investigation is founded if the worker concluded that the maltreatment likely occurred. For reports with multiple allegations, the report is considered founded if any of the allegations are founded.

The federal target for recurrence of abuse and neglect is 95 percent of children who have experienced a founded allegation of abuse or neglect will be safe from an additional founded allegation within 12 months. For children with a founded allegation of abuse or neglect in federal fiscal year 2016, 92.1 percent of these children were safe from re-abuse in the following 12 months.



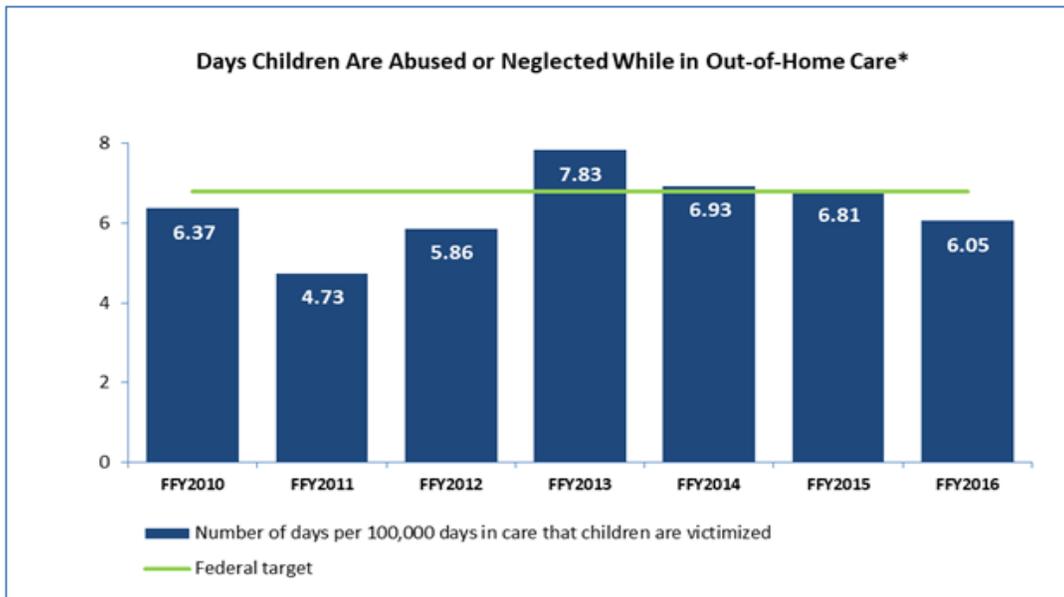
*Percentage of children with a founded allegation of abuse or neglect who did not have a new founded allegation within 12 months, excluding reports in the first 14 days. "Founded" means that an investigation concluded that the maltreatment was more likely than not to have occurred. For reports with multiple allegations, the report is considered founded if any of the allegations are founded. The federal target for this measure is 95 percent or more children will be free from additional founded allegations. FFY reflects the year of the first founded allegation and we must wait 12 months to determine if there was a new founded allegation.

Source: FamLink data reported to NCANDS and Results Washington; Child and Family Services Review measure calculation.

Objective: Improve safety for children placed in out-of-home care
Measured by: Children who are abused or neglected while in the placement and care authority of the state

Children’s Administration works diligently to ensure caregivers licensed to provide care for children and the homes in which they live are safe and stable. Those responsible for caring for children must undergo background checks, participate in education and training, and demonstrate competency in skills associated with caring for and nurturing vulnerable children.

The federal target for this measure is set very high, with an expectation that nearly all of the days children are in the placement and care authority of the state they will be free from abuse and neglect. Because this target is so high, the measure has been converted into the number of days all children are abused or neglected out of every 100,000 out-of-home care days that children are in placement. The federal target is 6.8 days or less per 100,000 days of out-of-home care. In federal fiscal year 2016, Washington did very well on this measure at 6.05 days per 100,000 days; performance that is well below the federal target.



*Number of days per 100,000 days in the care and custody of the state that children are abused or neglected. The federal target is 6.8 days or less, based on the observed performance needed to avoid a federal Program Improvement Plan.

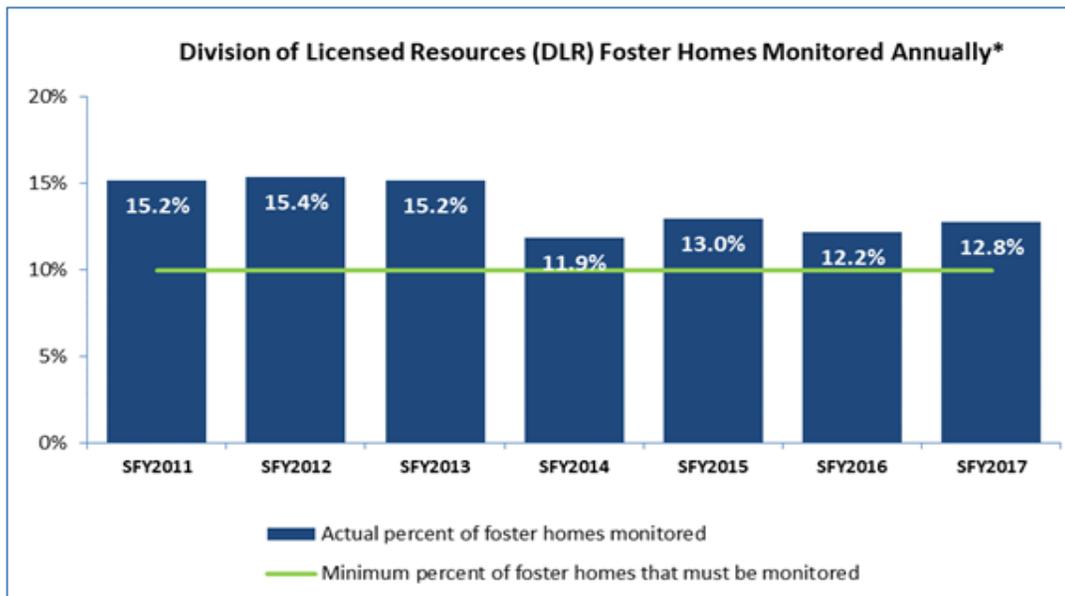
Source: FamLink data submitted to AFCARS and NCANDS; Child and Family Services Review measure calculation.

Objective: Improve safety for children placed in out-of-home care
Measured by: Foster homes receiving health and safety checks

Washington state law requires the department to monitor a random sample of no less than 10 percent of the total number of Children’s Administration licensed family foster homes by July 1 of each year and to report the results annually (RCW 74.13.260; RCW 74.13.031(6)).

In state fiscal year 2017, 12.8 percent of licensed homes received a health and safety check. Those caring for children, and the homes in which children live, must meet minimum licensing standards. Homes must be free of known safety hazards. For example, if the home accepts placement for children under the age of six years, fireplaces or wood stoves must be surrounded by safety fencing, all homes must keep medications secured, and foster parents must be trained in First Aid and CPR.

Licensors thoroughly inspect and evaluate the condition of homes and facilities to make sure no health or safety hazards have arisen since a license was issued or since a previous health and safety check occurred.



*Percentage of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) licensed foster homes with a health and safety check completed by DLR annually. The performance target is 10 percent or greater.

Source: FamLink

Objective: Increase worker visits with children
Measured by: Children visited every month by their worker

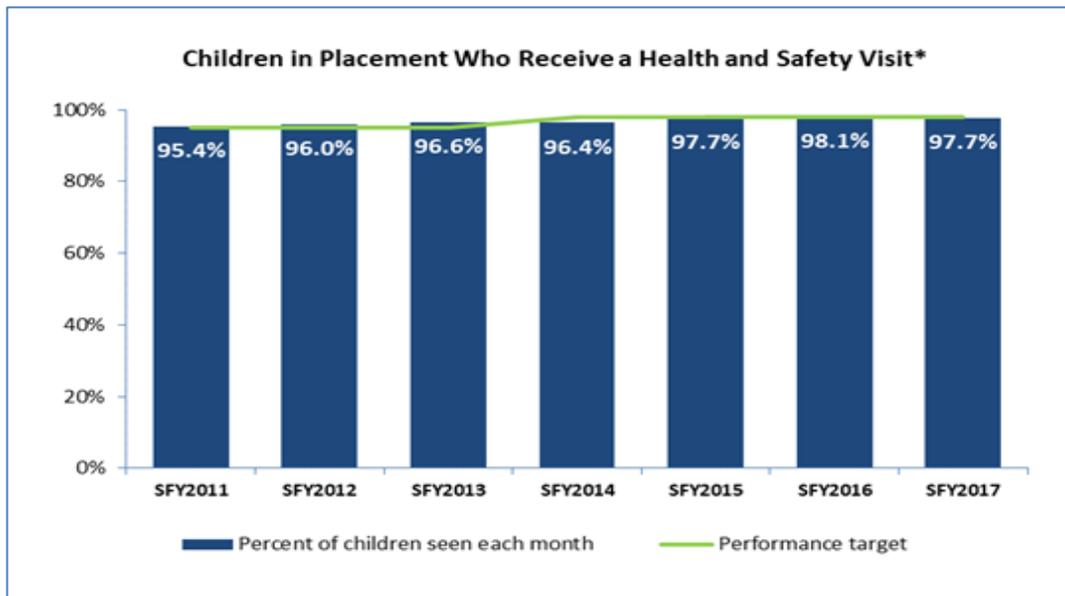
In order to monitor the health and safety of children in out-of-home care, workers are required to visit children face-to-face at least once a month, with the majority occurring in the child’s out-of-home placement. Face-to-face contact with children allows workers to:

- Assess a child’s health and well-being,
- Evaluate the placement home, including the child’s personal space, and
- Determine how well a child is adjusting to his or her placement.

While monthly in-person visits are the minimum requirement, Children’s Administration workers often make additional contact with children through telephone calls, case staffings, court hearings, and other personal visits.

Children’s Administration strives to see children in out-of-home care at least once during the calendar month with a private and individual face-to-face health and safety visit. Children’s Administration continues to strive to improve performance in this area as evidenced by its strategic plan target that 98 percent of children in out-of-home care will be seen each and every month. This target was established at the beginning of state fiscal year 2014.

Workers completed monthly health and safety visits with 97.7 percent of children in out-of-home placement during fiscal year 2017, which is a 0.4 percent drop in performance from state fiscal year 2016 and slightly below the performance target.



*The annual average percentage of children receiving a health and safety visit from their social worker each month during the state fiscal year. The performance target is 98 percent or greater.

Source: FamLink

Permanency

Goal: *Provide safe, stable, nurturing permanent placements as quickly as possible for children who are placed into out-of-home care*

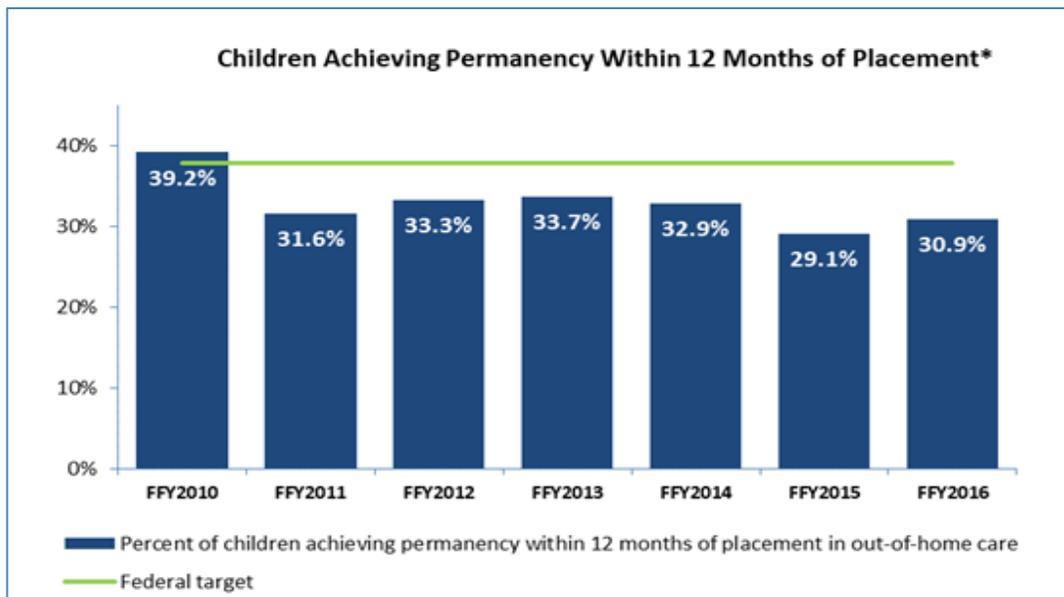
Objective: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care

Measured by: Children achieving permanency within 12 months of placement in out-of-home care

Children's Administration works to achieve permanency for children as quickly and safely as possible. We work to reunify children with their families when safety assessments show, and parents demonstrate, that they are able to safely care for their children and when reunification is in the best interest of the child. When children cannot be safely reunified, CA works to achieve permanency through adoption and guardianship as quickly as possible.

Children's Administration uses a Child Safety Framework, which focuses on increasing child safety throughout the life of a case. This framework includes all decisions made from intake through permanency, including the plan to return a child to his or her home.

Of children who were removed from their parents in federal fiscal year 2016, 30.9 percent were able to achieve permanency within 12 months of their placement out of their parent's home. For these children, 95 percent were reunified with their families, four percent exited to guardianship, and less than one percent were adopted.



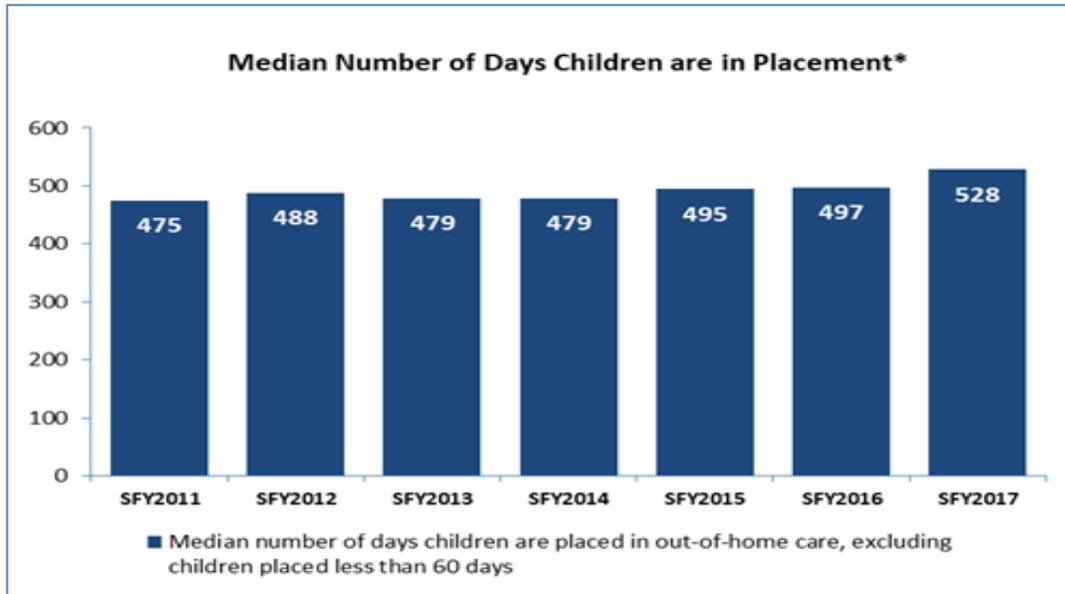
*Percent of children discharged to permanency within 12 months of placement into out-of-home care. The federal target is 37.9 percent or greater, based on the observed performance needed to avoid a federal Program Improvement Plan. FFY reflects the year the child entered care, allowing for 12 months to exit to permanency.

Source: FamLink data submitted to AFCARS; Child and Family Services Review measure calculation.

Objective: Decrease length of stay without increasing re-entry
Measured by: Median number of days children are placed in care

When children must be placed into out-of-home care to keep them safe, Children’s Administration strives to move them into permanent homes as quickly as is safely possible.

The median length of stay measure indicates the median number of days children spend in out-of-home care for children placed more than 60 days.



*Median number of days children are placed in out-of-home care on the last day of the state fiscal year, for children in DCFS custody placed more than 60 days.

Source: FamLink Monthly Metrics report.

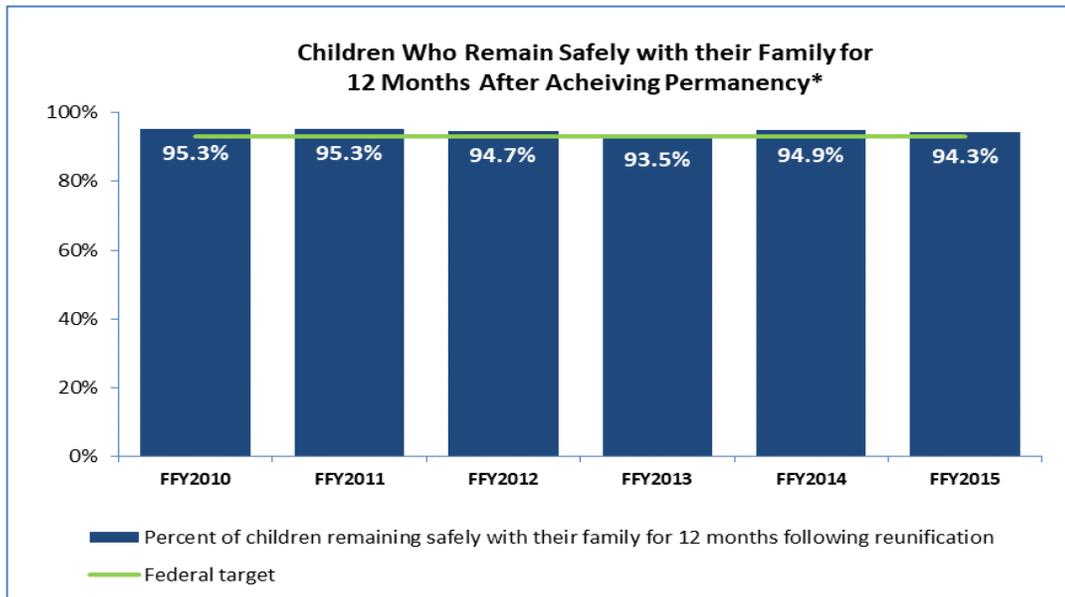
Objective: Decrease length-of-stay without increasing re-entry
Measured by: Children remaining safely at home following exit to permanency

Children’s Administration strives to safely maintain children in their own homes whenever possible, through community-based resources and natural supports. However, children cannot always be safely cared for by their own families.

Children’s Administration does not act alone in making the decision to remove a child from his or her parents’ care. Child Protective Services (CPS) makes recommendations to a court that a child needs to be placed in the home of a substitute caregiver due to safety threats. The courts, not CPS, make the decision about whether to remove children from their parents. Likewise, the decision to return children to the homes from which they have been removed is a serious legal decision. Child welfare professionals must assess whether or not a family has succeeded in eliminating safety threats so a child may return home.

Children’s Administration puts in place safety plans designed to control and manage safety threats when children are returned to parental care and to prevent children from returning to out-of-home care.

For children who entered care in federal fiscal year 2015 and returned home within 12 months, 5.7 percent of these children came back into out-of-home care within 12 months of their exit to permanency. 95 percent of the children who exited to permanency in the first 12 months were reunified with their families, and nearly all of the children who re-entered were from reunified families. 94.3 percent of the children exiting to permanency were able to remain safely at home for 12 months, exceeding the federal target of 93 percent or higher.



*Of all children who enter care in a 12-month period who discharged from out-of-home care within 12 months of entry, the percent that did not re-enter out-of-home care within 12 months from the date of discharge. FFY reflects the year the child entered care, allowing for 12 months to achieve permanency and 12 additional months to remain safely with their family.

The federal target is 93 percent or greater, based on the observed performance needed to avoid a federal Program Improvement Plan.

Source: FamLink data submitted to AFCARS; Child and Family Services Review measure calculation.

Conclusion

As the public child welfare system for Washington state, Children's Administration is held to very high standards for improving child safety, permanency, and the well-being of children and families.

In addition to continuous quality improvement efforts designed to meet the requirements of federal, state, and judicial oversight entities, the department engages in ongoing self-appraisal. Children's Administration workers are dedicated to doing the best work possible for vulnerable children, not because of mandates, but because it is the work to which we are committed.

Children's Administration will continue to engage in continuous quality improvement efforts and to increase research-based efforts to protect children and preserve families.